Nature in Jung-Stilling's *Lebensgeschichte*: A Study of the Portrayal of Nature in German Peasant Literature

Research Thesis

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Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling's *Lebensgeschichte*, published in 1777, is a significant contribution to peasant literature. Edited and submitted for publication by J. W. Goethe,[1] a friend of Jung-Stilling's, it is regarded as one of the best examples of a religious autobiography in German literature and is the first autobiography of a man from the 18th century who was able to work his way out of the peasantry.[2] Furthermore, authors who followed Jung-Stilling have acknowledged it as the first *Dorfgeschichte*.[3] *Dorfgeschichten*, or village stories, saw large reading as a literary genre in the first half of the 19th century. Presented through simple and straightforward narrative structure, *Dorfgeschichten* are stories about ordinary, everyday events in villages and the lives of peasants. With the success of Berthold Auerbach's "*Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten*," published in 1843, the style was recognized as a new, peculiar genre.[4] However, the genre's trivialization during the 1850s caused a noticeable, negative interpretation of the concept that lasts to the present. *Dorfgeschichten* also became politicized, and contributed to the rise in nationalism in the latter half of the 19th century. Eventually, these stories became an important propaganda tool for the National Socialists, who used them to glorify "Germanness."[5] Most recently, however, "new impulses for the genre have come out of civilization-critical, ecological trends."[6][7]

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[1] *Jugend* and *Jünglingsjahre*, the first two books of *Lebensgeschichte*, were originally published in Berlin and Leipzig by George Jacob Decker in 1777 and 1778 respectively.
[2] Hartmann, Walter. *Volksbildung: Ein Kapitel Literaturgeschichte der Goethezeit*. (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz Akademischer Verlag, 1985): 354.
[3] Hartmann, *Volksbildung*, 349.
[4] Weimar, Klaus, Harald Fricke, and Jan-Dirk Müller. *Reallexikon Der Deutschen Literaturwissenschaft: 2*. (Berlin [u.a.]: De Gruyter, 2000) 390.
[5] Weimar, "Dorfgeschichte", *Reallexikon*, 392.
[6] „Neue Impulse für die Gattung gingen zuletzt von zivilisationskritischen ökologischen Strömmungen aus." Weimar, "Dorfgeschichte", *Reallexikon*, 392.
[7] I have found no evidence of such new material.

Despite its supposed new pulses of life and the relative popularity of literary ecocriticism, literary scholars are not discussing peasant literature.[8] Indeed, the presentation of the peasant in literature has not been researched to a sufficient extent.[9] In particular, the presentation of the peasants' relationship to and interaction with nature has gone largely ignored despite the rise of ecocriticism. Very little is written about the portrayal of nature in peasant literature; perhaps because of its abuse at the hands of Nazi propagandists, or perhaps because it is considered to be uninteresting, simple, or utilitarian.

The latter, in fact, is suggested by Walter Hartmann in *Volksbildung: Ein Kapitel Literaturgeschichte der Goethezeit* (1985), and is reflected in the works of modern ecocritical writers such as Heather L. Sullivan.[10] Hartmann does include in his work a section on the role of nature in peasant literature.[11] Unfortunately, this section is quite brief. He introduces the role of nature in peasant literature by comparing it to how nature is represented in Goethe's famous *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*.[12] Hartmann opens this section referencing Werther's May 10th letter, in which Werther describes the valley he lies in, the rays of the sun through the trees, the insects surrounding him, and his feeling of the "presence of the Almighty." Hartmann states, "in the works of peasant

[8] Nor read much by the wider public or in school, as far as I know.
[9] Hartmann, *Volksbildung*, 35, 388. Thirty years after Hartmann laments this lack of research, there is still very little to be found.
[10] If ecocritics were concerned with the portrayal of nature in peasant literature, there would likely be a plethora of writing concerned with the topic. Unfortunately, only a lack thereof is to be found.
[11] Hartmann, *Volksbildung*, 386-390.
[12] Hartmann, *Volksbildung*, 386.

literature, one will search in vain for one such impression of nature on humans"[1314] and that "the things which threaten to overwhelm Werther will generally not be perceived by the figures of peasant literature."[15] He states further, "unworked land, perhaps seen and praised as beautiful and untouched nature by others, is meant solely, to be worked and made arable by humans."[16] "His [the peasant's] life is oriented on making nature into cultivatable land."[17] Hartmann concludes, "Without the cultivating influence of the peasant, nature has no significance for the figures of these novels."[18]

To Hartmann, the whole of peasant literature fits into this model, in which nature has a singular meaning: simple and utilitarian. According to this description, the figures of peasant literature are solely concerned with the potential agricultural uses of the land and nature that they observe. Yet, in analyzing the role of nature in peasant literature, he provides little, Pestalozzi aside, in the way of primary sources.[19] Hartmann also does not discuss Jung-Stilling's work; had he examined it, he might have noticed that his proposal about the role of nature in peasant literature does not apply to *Lebensgeschichte* – and thus perhaps also not to other examples of the genre.

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[13] „In den Werken der Bauernliteratur…wird man vergeblich nach einem solchen Eindruck der Natur auf den Menschen suchen." Hartmann, *Volksbildung*, 386.
[14] All translations included in this text are my own, unless otherwise stated.
[15] „Die Dinge, die Werther zu überwältigen drohen, werden generell von den Figuren der Bauernliteratur gar nicht wahrgenommen." Hartmann, *Volksbildung*, 386.
[16] „Unbearbeitetes Land, von anderen vielleicht als schöne und unberührte Natur angesehen und gepriesen, ist allein dazu da, von den Menschen bearbeitet und urbar gemacht zu werden." Hartmann, *Volksbildung*, 388.
[17] „Sein Leben ist darauf ausgerichtet, der Natur kultivierbares Land abzuringen." Hartmann, *Volksbildung*, 390.
[18] „Ohne den kultivierenden Einfluss des Bauern hat die Natur keine Bedeutung für die Figuren dieser Romane." Hartmann, *Volksbildung*, 390.
[19] Hartmann discusses *Lienhard und Gertrud* by Heinrich Pestalozzi, but does not directly address the role of nature in any other work by peasant authors.

Modern ecocritical writing also reflects a strong and general disinterest in peasant literature. The ecocritical literature concerned with Goethe, on the other hand, is prolific. This circumstance is fairly ironic, considering that, in the words of Heather L. Sullivan, Goethe's own settings were far away from "the urban sites where the authors of such poems and tales inevitably write."[20] In "Nature in a Box: Ecocriticism, Goethe's Ironic *Werther*, and Unbalanced Nature" (2011), Sullivan claims that "ecological thinking requires a multi-pronged perspective."[21] This multi-pronged perspective, Sullivan explains, would require consideration for the large and small scales of the global and local environments; in other words, consideration for all environments – both physical and cultural.[22] Furthermore, in "Nature and the 'Dark Pastoral' in Goethe's *Werther"* (2015), she critiques the "assumed intimacy with nature" of pastoral literature,[23] especially as it is displayed in Goethe's scenes of the "pastoral realms infused with aspects […] such as […] simple countryfolk, lush green landscapes, and low population."[24] However, despite her call for a multi-pronged approach and her critique of "assumed intimacy with nature," Sullivan, as well as many other literary ecocritics, has

[20] Sullivan, Heather I. "Nature and the "Dark Pastoral" in Goethe's Werther." (*Goethe Yearbook*. 22.1, 2015): 115.
[21] Sullivan, Heather I. "Nature in a Box: Ecocriticism, Goethe's Ironic Werther, and Unbalanced Nature." (*Ecozon@*, 2.2, 2011), 238.
[22] Sullivan, Nature in a Box, 238.
[23] Sullivan provides Terry Gifford's brief criteria for what constitutes literature as pastoral: (1) "Historic literary form in lyric and drama known for its shepherds and love stories; (2) Literature which describes the rural in contrast to the urban; (3) Pejorative or skeptical use of the term in situations where "the difference between the literary representation of nature and the material reality would be judged to be intolerable by the criteria of ecological concern."
[24] Sullivan, Nature and the Dark Pastoral, 121.

published an array of ecocritical analysis of literature from the Goethezeit, without taking into account peasant literature from the same era.[25]

The descriptions of nature found in *Jugend* and *Jünglingsjahre* fit neither Hartmann's descriptions of nature in peasant literature, nor Sullivan's ecocritical view of pastoral literature. Admittedly, there is one figure whose perspective fits the model presented by Hartmann – Stähler, a charcoal burner and the Stilling family's neighbor, but his role in the story is minor, and his utilitarian and non-religious relationship toward nature is presented critically. Furthermore, until ecocritics examine peasant literature or, more specifically, *Dorfgeschichte* such as Jung-Stilling's *Lebensgeschichte*, modern ecocriticism will lack the knowledge of diverse perspectives of nature present in such literature.

Examining *Lebensgeschichte* reveals that Jung-Stilling has created a complex web of protagonists, all of which have very different interactions with and relationships to nature. This variety of perspectives reflects the different views of nature at the time, as well as the beginning of Romanticism. The following characters in this partially fictional autobiography all hold distinct perspectives on nature: Eberhard, the fictitious portrayal of Jung-Stilling's grandfather, demonstrates a pietistic perspective towards nature; Stähler, the Stilling family's neighbor, maintains a simple, utilitarian, and peasant attitude toward nature; Margarete, Eberhard's wife and Jung-Stilling's grandmother, also views nature in a pietistic sense; Wilhelm, Eberhard's son and the character portraying Jung-Stilling's actual father, has a relationship with nature that is both pious and emotional, in so far as he observes something in nature and experiences a sentimental response that

[25] See Heather Sullivan's list of publications, available on her faculty webpage here: https://new.trinity.edu/faculty/heather-sullivan.

often relates to his memories; Dortchen, Wilhelm's wife and Henrich's mother, has a very emotional relationship toward nature—e.g., her mood is reflective of the seasons; Moritz, Dortchen's father and Jung-Stilling's maternal grandfather, has an emotional as well as scientific and mystical relationship with nature; Henrich, the young Jung-Stilling, has a perspective of nature that is both pious and heavily emotional, yet with clear Romantic traits, and is thus reflective of Jung-Stilling's shift in occupation and class from schoolteacher to oculist and professor. Whereas Dortchen's emotions are reflective of the seasons, and Wilhelm's are brought on by memory that is ignited by his experience with nature, Henrich's emotional responses are direct reactions to his experiences in nature that take place in the present. In the following study, I will analyze these different nature perspectives and how the narrator presents them, thereby possibly also gaining insight into the author Jung-Stillings's perspective on nature at the time of composing his memoir, as it is reflected in the narrator. I will analyze the characters' relevant experiences in nature, in the order that they are introduced in the text.[26] I will include discussions of narrator's voice and perspective throughout. I will focus only on the first two books, *Jugend* and *Jünglingsjahre,* because these sections contain Jung-Stilling and his family's life as part of the peasantry.[27]

Jung-Stilling's grandfather, named Eberhard Stilling in the story, is the first character introduced. Eberhard spends a great deal of his time in the forest, at least the whole summer, burning charcoal, as was common for peasants throughout this region,

[26] With the exception of Margarete, whose relevant appearances are scarce. I will include her with Eberhard, as her appearances mostly coincide with his.
[27] Hartmann, *Volksbildung*, 349.

because the small, family managed farms were not sufficient to feed entire families.[28] It is likely then, that Eberhard's life, as it is depicted in *Jugend*, is a relatively accurate portrayal of life for many peasants who lived in the Siegerland. Considering the great deal of time Eberhard spends working in the forest, his wife Margarete spends most of her time at home, running the household and helping her daughters with the farm work. Their son, Wilhelm, is the schoolteacher in nearby Lichthausen, and because of his bad foot, is not readily able to participate in manual labor and earns part of his bread as a tailor. Dortchen, his wife, is quite poor and has a fragile constitution, making her unable to perform physically demanding work, so that she helps Wilhelm in the tailor workshop. Her father, Moritz, was once a pastor and watchmaker, and is now an old, penniless alchemist. Henrich, the last of the major figures to be examined here, is a young boy, raised under his grandfather and father's watchful eyes. The narrator's voice, in addition to establishing the scenery in the story, often adds it's own perspective to the characters.

The story begins as the narrator gives form to the setting in a description. In Westphalia, there is a church diocese in a very mountainous area, from whose heights one can overlook many small counties and principalities. The narrator explains that the residents of the church village, Florendorf, in order to separate themselves from their neighbors, "who are mere peasants," and although they too must survive from agriculture and the breeding of livestock, have felt disgust that their home has the word "village" in its name, and thus have named it Floren*burg*.[29]

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[28]Völkel, Martin. *Jung-stilling: Ein Heimweh Muss Doch Eine Heimat Haben : Annäherungen an Leben Und Werk 1740-1817*. (Nordhausen: T. Bautz, 2008): 13.
[29] Jung-Stilling, Johann H, and Wolfgang Pfeiffer-Belli. *Lebensgeschichte*. (München: Winkler Verlag, 1968): 5.

An hour southeast of Florenburg is the village of Tiefenbach, so named for its position between two mountains. The houses at the feet of the mountains hang on both sides of a stream. The eastern mountain, the Giller, rises steeply, and its surface, swept toward the west, is thickly covered in beech trees. From the top of the Giller is a view over fields and meadows, which are enclosed on both sides by mountains. These mountains, the narrator explains, are also completely covered with beech and oak trees. There are no holes in this tree line, apart from where sometimes a boy leads an ox up and collects firewood.[30] The northern mountain, the Geißenberg, "rises like a cone of sugar against the clouds" (Jung-Stilling 5). At the tip of this mountain there are the ruins of an old castle, and at the bottom of this mountain stands the house in which the Stilling family and their ancestors have lived (Jung-Stilling 5).

On just the first page, the narrator has described a detailed natural setting. The description is specific and factually accurate: the area described is near the city of Hilchenbach, in the historic Siegerland. The Giller and the Geißenberg are part of the Rothaar Mountains, which stretch from North Rhine-Westphalia into Hesse. At the top of the Geißenberg are the ruins of the Ginsburg castle, which still stands today. Despite Hartmann's criticism that Jung-Stilling had strongly idealized his childhood[31], the narrator's descriptions of at least the landscape in which he grew up coincide with fact. The land in the region was quite meager, and thus the peasants there turned to the timber and ore industries as additional sources of income.[32] Jung-Stilling most likely described nature as he did not for romantic embellishment, but rather because it was the reality he

[30] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 5.
[31] Hartmann, *Volksbildung*, 354.
[32] Völkel, *Heimweh*, 13.

had experienced.[33] The thick layer of oak and beech trees is typical of the region. The picture is typical of the Romantic style as well, with its panoramas from mountaintops and the ruins of a castle.[34] The narrator, through simile, likens the Geißenberg to a *Zuckerhut*, a cone of sugar, and adds a touch of intimate knowledge as he relates the possibility of young boys searching for firewood. This description establishes the setting, as well as the different aspects of nature that are important to various characters.

As Eberhard is introduced to the reader, he has come down from the Geißenberg to return home. As he watches the sunset, he whistles a church song on a leaf, "*Der Lieben Sonnen Lauf und Pracht hat nun den Tag vollführet*," and thinks through the song. As he watches the sunset, his neighbor and fellow charcoal burner Stähler approaches him. Stähler, typically unconcerned by such things,[35] ignores the sight of the setting sun, and explains to Eberhard that if the weather remains clear, their work will be finished in three weeks.[36] Eberhard is disinterested in such small talk and continues to whistle on the leaf. He begins to reflect upon the Goodness and Love of God, as he watches the sun fall behind the mountains.[37] He says to Stähler, "I was just in thought about it; it is also evening with us, Neighbor Stähler! The shadow of death rises daily nearer to us."[38]

Eberhard is clearly able to relate what he sees in nature to his own life through metaphor. A pious man, Eberhard also attributes the beauty of nature to the goodness of

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[33] Völkel, *Heimweh*, 15.
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[35] „…kam sein Nachbar Stähler hinter ihm her, der ein wenig geschwinder gegangen war, und sich eben nicht viel um die untergehende Sonne bekümmert haben mochte." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 6.
[36] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 6.
[37] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 6.
[38] „Ich war soeben in Gedanken drüber; es ist auch Abend mit uns, Nachbar Stähler! der Schatten des Todes steigt uns täglich näher…" Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 6.

God. Reflecting upon his old age and coming death, he declares: "I also await, truly without fear, the necessary moment, where I shall be freed from this hard, old, and stiff corpse, to be with the souls of my forefathers, and other holy men, to be able to walk in an eternal peace."[39] This is in sharp contrast to Stähler, who is an example of a peasant concerned with the matters of peasants: he estimates, based on the weather and firsthand knowledge, when their work will be finished and reacts unemotionally to Eberhard's reflection on the setting sun and the evening of their lives, simply replying, "That can well be."[40] As Eberhard discusses the way in which he has raised his children, believing firmly that they will remain pious after his passing, Stähler laughs, "even as a fox would laugh, if he could, who has carried off a chicken."[41] This gives Stähler's character, which is otherwise practical and utilitarian, a Romantic, fairy tale element. Stähler is presented as a trickster, laughing before he reveals to Eberhard that he knows something about his family that Eberhard does not. However, despite the narrator's playful portrayal of Stähler, his relationship with nature fits the model presented by Hartmann: Stähler is concerned with the weather, how it effects the progress of his work, and is not concerned at all with the aesthetic side of nature. As Hartmann correctly states, nature for Stähler has no meaning beyond its usefulness to him. Only the narrator's comparison of Stähler to a fox gives this character an aspect that is not present in Hartmann's model.

[39] „Ich erwarte auch wirklich ohne Furcht den wichtigen Augenblick, wo ich von diesem schweren, alten und starren Leib befreit werden soll, um mit den Seelen meiner Voreltern, und anderer heiligen Männer, in einer ewigen Ruhe umgehen zu können." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 6.
[40] „Das kann wohl sein!" Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 6.
[41] „Stähler lachte herzlich! eben wie ein Fuchs lachen würde, wenn er könnte, der dem wachsamen Hahn ein Hühnchen entführt hat…" Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 7.

Soon Eberhard stands before his front door. His wife, Margarete, has left a piece of pancake for him on an earthenware plate in the hot ashes of the oven.[42] This small detail concerning the material of the plate shows that Eberhard and Margarete maintain closeness to nature even in their home. On the night of Wilhelm and Dortchen's wedding, the narrator provides a more detailed description of the utensils and tools used by the Stilling family. "Two long planks were laid next to each other on wooden trestles […] the spoons were [made] from maple wood, wonderfully smooth, wrought with pressed out roses, flowers, and foliage. The knives (*Zulegmesser*) had beautiful yellow wooden handles; so were the plates nicely round and smooth [and] turned from hardest beech wood. The beer foamed in white stone pitchers with blue flowers."[43]

The description of the utensils and table setting of the wedding celebration is very specific. The resources from which the objects have been made are included, and they are all embellished with images of natural things. This scene perfectly illustrates the Stilling family's relationship to nature. They live a life close to nature, using its resources in their daily lives as well as recognizing the beauty of nature and embellishing their tools with such images.

Eberhard is not only amazed by terrestrial nature. After Wilhelm and Dortchen's wedding, he and Dortchen's father, Moritz, sit and talk.[44] Eberhard proclaims his love for

[42] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 8.
[43] „Zwei lange Bretter waren in der Stuben nebeneinander auf hölzerne Böcke gelegt, anstatt des Tisches; Margarete hatte feinste Tischtücher drüber gespreitet, und nun wurden die Speisen aufgetragen. Die Löffel waren von Ahornholz, schön glatt, mit ausgestochenen Rosen, Blumen und Laubwerk gearbeitet. Die Zulegmesser hatten schöne gelbe hölzerne Stiele; so waren auch die Teller schön rund und glatt vom härtesten weißen Buchenholz gedrechselt. Das Bier schäumte in weißen steinernen Krügen mit blauen Blumen." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 15.
[44] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 15-17.

astronomy, and discusses with Moritz the constellations Sirius, Ursa Major, and the Big Dipper. Concerning Sirius, Eberhard says, "It blazes so greenish."[45] Eberhard, in regards to Ursa Major and the Big Dipper, proclaims, "O what a wonderful God."[46]

Eberhard once again attributes the beauty of the night sky to the work of God. He reflects not only on their beauty, but also their religious implications. His wife Margarete, in contrast to Eberhard's wonder of the stars, says, "I can indeed see from a flower, that God is wonderful […] we live by the grass and the flowers; let us admire them here; when we are in Heaven, then we will observe the stars."[47] Margarete, like her husband, attributes the beauty of nature to God. Although, unlike her husband, she is concerned with the nature that is closest to her in the present: the grass and flowers that she can already see.

In a later scene, Eberhard goes with his daughter Mariechen and his grandson Henrich into the forest to collect firewood.[48]Dortchen, Henrich's mother, has long been dead. Eberhard has grown older, but continues to work. While Mariechen and Henrich sit and talk, Eberhard goes off on his own. Soon, Eberhard returns, and describes to the others a vision he had:

> As I went from you into the forest, I saw a light far before me, just so as when the sun rises early in the morning. I was amazed. […] is that then a new sun? That must be something wonderful, I must see that. I went up to it; as I came to the front, lo, there was before me a plain, which I could not see over with my eyes…such a beautiful aroma, such a cool wind came across, I cannot tell you. It was such white light through the whole area, the day with the sun is night against it. There stood many thousands of magnificent castles...as if they were of pure

[45] „Er flammt so grünlich." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 16.
[46] „O welch ein wunderbarer Gott!" Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 16.
[47] „…ich kann wohl an einer Blume sehn, daß Gott wunderbar ist…Wir wohnen be idem Gras und den Blumen; die laßt un shier bewundern; wann wir im Himmel sind, dann wollen wir die Sterne betrachten." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 17.
[48] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 56.

> silver! There were gardens, bushes, streams. O God how beautiful! Not far from me stood a large, wonderful castle […] someone came out of the door of this castle, up to me, like a virgin. Ach! A wonderful angel! As she was near me, ach God! There was our blessed Dortchen...She said so kindly to me […] 'Father, there is our eternal home, you [will] come to us soon.' – I looked, and saw everything was forest before me; the wonderful face was gone. Children, I will die soon; how I look forward to it![49]

The premonition of his death represents Eberhard's idea of heaven: magnificent castles surrounded by nature; gardens, streams, and cool wind, with a wonderful scent in the air. Even considering his own death, Eberhard does not lose his appreciation of nature in relation to God; rather, he looks forward to it in anticipation. So strongly is he affected by the vision, that the narrator describes Eberhard as a changed man thereafter, "as one who is in exile and not at home."[50]

Soon after the vision of his death, the time of year in which Eberhard routinely patches the roof draws near. His wife and family remind him of the dangers in climbing to the roof. Despite their warnings and his recent vision of Dortchen, Eberhard chooses to go through with the repairs. However, the morning of the day of the repairs, he is restless:

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[49] „Wie ich von euch in Wald hineinging, sah ich weit vor mir ein Licht, eben so als wenn morgens früh die Sonne aufgeht. Ich verwunderte mich sehr [...] ist das denn eine neue Sonne? Das muß ja was Wunderlichs sein, das muß ich sehen. Ich ging drauf an; wie ich vorn hinkam, siehe da war vor mir eine Ebne, die ich mit meinen Augen nicht übersehen konnte [...] so ein schöner Geruch, so eine kühle Luft kam darüber her, ich kann's euch nicht sagen. Es war so weiß Licht durch die ganze Gegend, der Tag mit der Sonne ist Nacht dagegen. Da standen viel tausend prächtige Schlösser [...] als wenn sie von lauter Silber wären. Da waren Gärten, Büsche, Bäche. O Gott wie schön! – Nicht weit von mir stand ein großes herrliches Schloss [...] Aus der Tür dieses Schlosses kam jemand heraus, auf mich zu, wie eine Jungfrau. Ach! ein herrlicher Engel! – Wie sie nah bei mir war, ach Gott! da war unser seliges Dortchen [...] Sie sagte gegen mich so freundlich [...] 'Vater, dort ist unsere ewige Wohnung, Ihr kommt bald zu uns.' – Ich sah, und siehe alles war Wald vor mir; das herrliche Gesicht war weg. Kinder, ich sterbe bald; wie freu ich mich drauf!" Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 59.

[50] „Der alte Stilling war von der Zeit an, wie einer der in der Fremde und nicht zu Hause ist." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 59.

he goes room to room through the house, as if he is searching for something. Later in the day, as though he senses his approaching death, Eberhard decides to climb the cherry tree in the yard and eat his fill of cherries.[51] As he sits in the tree, eating cherries and throwing twigs down to Henrich, Margarete decides to join him. Eberhard is rejuvenated, "like an eagle."[52] The two sit in the tree together and enjoy once more "the sweet fruit of their youth."[53] This is Eberhard and Margarete's last joyful time together: Margarete soon goes to the garden with their daughter Mariechen, and just an hour later, Eberhard falls from the roof.[54] He passes away within days, and is buried in the churchyard in Florenburg. The narrator describes the grave in detail:

> There, where the churchyard is highest, there sleeps Father Stilling on the hill. No magnificent gravestone covers his grave; but often in springtime, a pair of pigeons fly there alone, coo and nuzzle each other between the grass and the flowers, which flourish forth from Father Stilling's decay (Jung-Stilling 65).[55]

The circumstances of Eberhard's death represent his character and his life well. In life, he was a pious man, who spent his time working in and around nature. The narrator's voice, in describing his death and his grave, reflects this. Eberhard spent much of his life working, and died patching the roof with grass. His grave, in the churchyard, is not gaudy or spectacularly adorned, but rather is simple. The narrator notes that pigeons, common

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[51] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 62.
[52] Stilling...sagte, das heißt recht verjüngt werden, wie die Adler.
[53] Da saßen die beide ehrliche alte Grauköpfe in den Ästen des Kirschbaumes, und genossen noch einmal zusammen die süßen Früchte ihrer Jugend.
[54] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 63.
[55] „...da wo der Kirchhof am höchsten ist, da schläft Vater Stilling auf dem Hügel. Sein Grab bedeckt kein prächtiger Leichstein; aber oft fliegen im Frühling ein paar Täubchen einsam hin, girren und liebkosen sich zwischen dem Gras und Blumen, die aus Vater Stillings Moder hervorgrünen." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 65.

and simple birds, visit Eberhard's grave, as opposed to a nobler bird. The narrator also portrays Eberhard's death as a transformation into nature. The narrator describes the grass and flowers as flourishing, nourished by Eberhard's body as he decays. Eberhard's death and the nourishment his body returns to nature in the churchyard are representative of his personal relationship with nature: ultimately, the connection he drew between the simplest beauty in nature and attributing it to God.

Wilhelm, Eberhard's son, has a very different relationship with nature than his father. Unlike Eberhard, who praises the goodness of God when he finds himself in nature, Wilhelm is often brought to emotional duress in the presence of nature. His sentimentality, especially when some aspect of nature sparks his memory, often brings him to tears. When Wilhelm is introduced, he approaches his parents (Eberhard and Margarete) and reveals his desire to marry Dortchen. After receiving their blessing, he goes to bed. As he looks through his open window and sees the forest in its deep silence, he hears two nightingales singing.[56] This sort of occurrence, the narrator explains, was "often a sign to Wilhelm."[57] Inspired by this sign, Wilhelm thanks God for giving him such parents and such a virtuous woman. He stops, when "tears and sensations inhibited his speaking."[58]

This scene illustrates how sentimental Wilhelm is, as he is ultimately moved to tears by the singing of nightingales. The next morning, Wilhelm wakes early and goes out into the forest. Here, in the woods, he renews all the sacred resolutions he has made

[56] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 10.
[57] „Dieses war Wilhelm öfters ein Wink gewesen." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 10.
[58] „Tränen und Empfindungen hemmten ihm die Sprache." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 10.

throughout his life.[59] Here, Wilhelm shows that he is still somewhat similar to his father. Wilhelm, too, sees God at work in nature, and thus goes into nature to renew his pious intentions in the presence of God. However, unlike Eberhard, Wilhelm interprets nature sometimes as a "sign," attaching a personal and symbolic interpretation to what his father would simply see as God's beautiful creation. Wilhelm thus shows a level of individualism that is not present in Eberhard. Eberhard believes nature to be God's creation, there for all to see; Wilhelm interprets nature as symbolic, as something there especially for *him* to see.

The forest around the Stilling family's home is not only a place for Wilhelm to become closer to God. After the guests at his and Dortchen's wedding have eaten, they begin "rational discussions."[60] Wilhelm and Dortchen, however, want to be alone and talk. The two go deep into the woods, and, with the distance from the others, "their love awoke."[61] This scene marks the moment in which, for Wilhelm, the forest becomes more than a place to pray to God. It becomes permanently tied to his love for Dortchen. After the tragedy of Dortchen's death, Wilhelm often dreams of her and how the two would go walking in the forest together.[62] He does not go to the forest himself for some time – instead he withdraws into his room, as though he no longer needs the forest anymore.

Wilhelm's sentimental attachment to the Geißenberg forest and his associating it with Dortchen reappear after several years. By the time Henrich is eight years old,

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[59] „Er stund auf, ging heraus in den Wald, und erneuerte alle seine heiligen Vorsätze die er je in seinem Leben sich vorgenommen hatte." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 10.
[60] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte,* 15.
[61] „Mit der Entfernung von den Menschen wuchs ihre Liebe." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 15.
[62] „Dann träumte er oft, wie er mit Dortchen im Geißenberger Wald spaziere." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 34.

Wilhelm sometimes takes him to the old Geißenberg castle, where he shows Henrich where Dortchen had walked and what she had done.[63] On one such occasion, Wilhelm and Henrich explore the ruins of the castle while searching for snail shells – one of Dortchen's favorite things to do. Henrich, while searching, "found a *Zulegmesser* with a yellow bumps and a green handle next to a wall under a rock."[64] Henrich, excited over what he has found, shows it to his father. "Wilhelm saw it, became pale, [and] began to sob and howl."[65] Henrich turns the knife around, and sees his mother's name inscribed into the blade. Henrich cries out, "and laid there like a dead man."[66] As Wilhelm tries to comfort his son, he finds himself comforted.[67] Finding the knife had made him aware of Dortchen's likeness in his son.[68]

Wilhelm finally comes to terms with Dortchen's death when he recognizes the part of Henrich's personality that is similar to hers - the young Henrich's wonder towards nature. Wilhelm is a changed man thereafter. Nonetheless, he never overcomes his sentimentality, particularly concerning Dortchen and his son Henrich, and cries on numerous occasions throughout the story. However, his character assumes a minor role from this point on in the story. More importantly, he has no more real interactions with nature from this point on.

Wilhelm, like Eberhard, views the nature around him as an extension of God. When he observes nature, he is reminded of his beliefs as well as the memories of the one

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[63] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 44.
[64] „Henrich fand neben einer Mauer unter einem Stein ein Zulegmesserchen mit gelben Buckeln und grünen Stiel." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 44.
[65] „Wilhelm besah es, wurde blaß, fing an zu schluchzen und zu heulen." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 44.
[66] „Er schrie laut, und lag da wie ein Toter." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 44.
[67] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 45.
[68] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 46.

he loves. In contrast to Eberhard, Wilhelm is not able to appreciate nature with the satisfaction of his father. After Wilhelm has remarried, having given up his work as schoolmaster and tailor, he now must work in the field with his new wife. He longs with pain for a position as a teacher.[69]

Dortchen, Wilhelm's wife, is rather fragile, and thus unable to perform any work outside in the fields with Margarete or Eberhard's daughters. The narrator describes her constitution, explaining that "Dortchen had delicate limbs and hands, she became tired quickly, and then she sighed and cried."[70] However, unlike Wilhelm's sentimentality, which is caused by Dortchen's own, and then by Dortchen's death, her emotions are very much caused by nature itself. The narrator thus introduces her relationship to nature:

> The sun would rise beautifully, so she would cry, and she observed it deeply […] It would set, so she would cry. There goes the comforting friend away from us again, she said often then, and longed [to be] far away in the forest, at the time of twilight. But nothing was more moving to her than the moon; she felt then something indescribable, and went entire evenings to the bottom of the Geißenberg.[71]

On one such occasion, when Henrich is about one and a half years old, Dortchen asks Wilhelm to walk with her to the Geißenberger castle. "As soon as they entered the forest, they looped their arms together and went step by step up the mountain under the

[69] Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 91.
[70] „Dortchen aber hatte zarte Glieder und Hände, sie wurde geschwind müde, und dann seufzte sie und weinte." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 21.
[71] „Ging die Sonne schön auf, so weinte sie, und betrachtete sie tiefsinnig [...] ging sie unter, so weinte sie. Da gehet der tröstliche Freund wieder von uns, sagte sie dann oft, und sehnte sich weit weg in den Wald, zur Zeit der Dämmerung. Nichts aber war ihr rührender, als der Mond; sie fühlte dann was Unaussprechliches, und ging ganze Abende unten an dem Geißenberg." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 28.

shadows of trees, and the diverse chirping of birds."[72] Wilhelm expresses his concern about her melancholy. Dortchen explains:

> I want to tell you, how it is to me. When I see in spring, how everything rises, the leaves on the trees, the flowers and the weeds, it is to me…as if I were in a world in which I do not belong. But, as soon as I find a yellow leaf, a wilted flower, or dry weed, *dann werden mir die Tränen los*…and I was never happier, than in spring.[73]

The narrator describes the scene as they reach the ruins. "They sensed the cool air from the Rhein, and saw how it played with and whistled around the long, dry blades of grass and ivy leaves on the crumbled wall."[74] Dortchen declares, "Here is truly my place, here I must live."[75] The narrator summarizes the two's experiences at the castle, stating that as the sun begins to set, "Dortchen and her Wilhelm had truly felt the blissfulness of melancholy."[76] As they leave the forest, "a deadly shiver pierced Dortchen's entire body."[77] The two return to the Stillings' home, and she is struck by a fever. Wilhelm lays

[72] „Sobald sie in den Wald kamen, schlungen sie sich in ihre Arme und gingen Schritt vor Schritt unter dem Schatten der Bäume, und dem vielfältigen Zwitschern der Vögel den Berg hinauf." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 28.
[73] „Aber ich will dir sagen, wie es mir ist. Wenn ich im Frühling sehe, wie alles aufgeht, die Blätter an den Bäumen, die Blumen und die Kräuter, so ist mir [...] als wenn ich in einer Welt wäre, worin ich nicht gehörte. Sobald ich aber ein gelbes Blatt, eine verwelkte Blume, oder dürres Kraut finde, dann werden mir die Tränen los...und ich war nie fröhlicher, als im Frühling." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 29.
[74] „[...] empfanden die kühle Luft vom Rhein her, und sahen wie sie mit den langen dürren Grashalmen und Efeublättern an den zerfallenen Mauren spielte und darumpiff." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 29.
[75] „Hier ist recht mein Ort [...] hier müßt ich wohnen." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 29-30.
[76] „Nun begann die Sonne unterzugehen, und Dortchen mit ihrem Wilhelm hatten recht die Wonne der Wehmut gefühlt." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 33.
[77] „Wie sie den Wald hinabgingen, durchdrang ein tödlicher Schauer Dortchens ganzen Leib." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 33.

with his head on her chest, and feels her pulse dwindling, and he "received her last breath in his mouth."[78]

Although she cannot work in nature as Eberhard does and as Wilhelm must, Dortchen has a deep connection with it. Her emotions are ruled by the seasons and their manifestations and she is fully aware of this relationship. The scene at the ruins mirrors Dortchen's fragile state: the dry weeds and ivy climbing on the crumbling castle walls are much her state of mind, which is easily controlled by the weather and the changing of seasons. Her death comes soon after she leaves her "true place" at the Geißenberg castle. Her spirit lives on through her son, Henrich, who I will discuss further along.

Dortchen's father Moritz, a former pastor, clockmaker, and alchemist, has spent much of his life searching for the Philosopher's Stone: a mythical stone which grants its possessor incredible knowledge. The stone is supposedly attainable only through the pseudoscience of alchemy. Moritz, in his search for the Stone, claims to have "penetrated deeply into the knowledge of nature."[79] Moritz' fascination with nature is part scientific, part mystical, part religious, and part emotional. In performing alchemy, Moritz has come to understand nature from a scientific standpoint. However, he has wasted between thirty and forty years of his life searching for a mythological stone. Despite his search for the stone, Moritz, being a former pastor, has not lost his religious beliefs. He believes the Philosopher's stone to be "a gift of God."[80] Regarding his discussion of the stars with Eberhard, Moritz exclaims, "there are so many wonders in nature; if we truly observed

[78] „Da lag Wilhelm und empfing Dortchens letzten Atemzug in seinen Mund." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 33.
[79] „Nun aber, da ich durch die lange Erfahrung etwas gelernt habe, und tief in die Erkenntnisse der Natur eingedrungen bin…" Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 15.
[80] „[…] da [der Stein der Weisen] ein freies Geschenk Gottes ist." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 16.

them, we could get to know the Wisdom of God."[81] Moritz believes in his heart that through nature, as it is God's creation, mankind can understand science as well as religious knowledge. Unlike any of the other characters, Moritz views nature as something to be used – not as unworked land, but rather a tool used for understanding scientific and religious mysteries.

There is, however, another side to Moritz' view of nature. Like his daughter, Moritz also has an emotional connection to it. After Wilhelm and Dortchen's wedding, Moritz eventually visits the Stilling family in their household for the first time since the celebration. He appears to be a different person, now timid and saddened.[82] As evening arrives, he asks Wilhelm and Dortchen to lead him up to the Geißenberg castle. As they walk through the forest, Moritz reveals the reason for his negative temperament: "It is so sure to me here under the shadows of the beeches. The higher we come, the freer I become [...] This autumn must surely be the last of my life."[83] Moritz, surrounded by shadows, literally and figuratively, is moved to reveal that he senses the shadow of death calling to him.

> His sentiment is paralleled by the narrator's voice as they reach the castle ruins.
>
> At the top of the mountain, where they could see across to the Rhein and over the entire area, they sat on a ruined wall of the castle. The sun stood in the distance not much higher than the blue mountains. Moritz watched rigidly thither, and was silent for a long time.[84]

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[81] „Es sind so viele Wunder in der Natur; wenn wir die recht betrachten, so können wir die Weisheit Gottes wohl kennenlernen." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 17.
[82] „Er schien ganz verändert, kleinmütig und betrübt zu sein." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 21.
[83] „Mir ist so wohl unter dem Schatten der Maibuchen. Je höher wir kommen, je freier werd ich [...] dieser Herbst muß wohl der letzte meines Lebens sein." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 22.
[84] „Oben auf dem Berge, wo sie bis an den Rhein, und die ganze Gegend übersehen konnten, setzten sie sich an eine zerfallene Mauer des Schlosses. Die Sonne stand in der

Moritz associates the setting of the sun, signifying the end of the day, with the end of his own life. As the three climb the mountain to the castle ruins, a symbol of decay and deterioration, Moritz feels freer with each step. As they reach the ruins, and observe the setting sun, Moritz reflects on his life and how he has wasted it in search of the Philosopher's Stone. This growing darkness in his spirit is reflected in the setting of the sun and the consequent growing of shadows as the light falls behind the distant mountains. Moritz does return to making clocks in the following months but this does not last long: the following winter he is lost. He is found three days later, frozen to death under the snow.[85]

Moritz' death represents his feeling of worthlessness in the face of his minimal legacy. Feeling that he wasted his life, abandoning his service to God and searching for the Philosopher's Stone, he wanders into the snow to die. Dying in the cold snow of winter is representative of his cold opinion of himself. It is as though he left his spirit atop the mountain at the ruins of the Geißenberg castle, then living only long enough to perish in a fitting manner. This is in stark contrast to Eberhard's experiences on the mountains and at the castle ruins: Eberhard rejoices and finds comfort in the setting sun, as well as his vision at the ruins, whereas Moritz laments. Although both are religious men, Moritz finds no solace at the prospect of dying and does not look forward to it as Eberhard does.

Ferne nicht hoch mehr über dem blauen Gebirge. Moritz sah starr dorthin, und schwieg lange [...]" Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte,* 22.

[85] „Doch dieses währte nicht lange, denn den folgenden Winter verlor man ihn; man fang ihn nach dreien Tagen unter dem Schnee und war totgefroren." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 22.

Henrich, the young Jung-Stilling, is introduced as a major character after Dortchen's death. The narrator describes a typical day in Henrich's early childhood, in which Wilhelm allows him to play in the orchard and Geißenberg forest.[86] The narrator vividly describes how Henrich would use his imagination to transform this small part of the family's property into many different images:

> This area, the Stillings' orchard and a line of forest which bordered the yard, was visited daily in good weather by our young boy, and [was] made into purely ideal landscapes. There was an Egyptian desert, in which he reshaped a shrub into a cave, in which he hid himself and imagined the holy Antonius, indeed also prayed rather sincerely in this enthusiasm…there was Turkey, where the Sultan and his daughter, the beautiful Marcebilla, lived; there was the Castle Montalban on a cliff, in which Reinhold lived. He went on a pilgrimage to these places daily, no man can imagine the bliss that the boy himself enjoyed; his spirit flowed over, he stammered rhymes and had poetic inspirations.[87]

Not out of the ordinary for children, Henrich's imagination runs wild as he plays outside in the forest around his family's home. Henrich, as he plays outside daily, imagines the many different places he has learned of in books and stories. He even imagines religious figures, and prays in the forest, like his father, Wilhelm. The narrator describes his fun as bliss, pure happiness, in which he is poetically inspired. Henrich's affection for nature is thus introduced; as is Jung-Stilling's own love for nature, through the voice of the narrator in describing Henrich's childhood.

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[86] „Ließ ihn Wilhelm in den Baumhof und Geißenberger Wald spazieren." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 40.

[87] "Diese Gegend, Stillings Baumhof und ein Strich Waldes, der an den Hof grenzte, wurde von unserm jungen Knaben also täglich bei gutem Wetter besucht, und zu lauter idealischen Landschaften gemacht. Da war eine ägyptische Wüste, in welcher er einen Strauch zur Höhle umbildete, in welche er sich verbarg und den heiligen Antonius vorstellte, betete auch wohl in diesem Enthusiasmus recht herzlich...dort war die Türkei, wo der Sultan und seine Tochter, die schöne Marcebilla, wohnten; da war auf einem Felsen das Schloß Montalban, in welchem Reinhold wohnte...Nach diesem Örtern wallfahrte er täglich, keim Mensch kann sich die Wonne einbilden die der Knabe daselbst genoß; sein Geist floß über, er stammelte Reimen und hatte dichterische Einfälle." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 40-41.

Henrich's days are always filled with nature. Not only does he play daily in the yard and forest, but the way to and from school is filled with nature as well. The narrator later describes his way home from school, in Tiefenbach, which "went through green meadows, forests, and shrubberies, uphill and down, and the pure, real nature around him made the deepest, most solemn impressions in his open, free heart."[88] As a schoolboy, Henrich begins to feel a deep, emotional connection to nature, from which he experiences profound sentiments. Unlike any other character, Henrich's relationship with nature quickly evolves from the imaginations of a child to the emotions of a person fascinated by "pure, real nature." Unlike for his father and grandfather, nature, for Henrich, is not evidence of the goodness of God or full of symbols to be interpreted: it is something to witness and something that evokes significant emotions. Henrich is in no way concerned with the agricultural use of nature. None of the other characters in *Lebensgeschichte* exhibit such a relationship with nature.

Henrich, similar to Eberhard before his death, has a strange experience while at the Geißenberg castle. Henrich, before he goes to the ruins, looks through the window of the house, "in order to once more look at his old romantic places."[89] He wanders from the house, into the woods, and he felt so at home in his soul, "that he forgot the entire world."[90] As he wanders, he soon finds himself at the ruins on the western side of the castle. When he looks upon the fallen walls, he sees "a graceful woman standing, pale,

[88] „Der Weg ging durch grüne Wiesen, Wälder und Gebüsche, bergauf und -ab, und die reine wahre Natur um ihn machte die tiefsten feierlichsten Eindrücke in sein offenes freies Herz." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 54.
[89] „[Henrich]...stund ans Fenster, um noch einmal seine alte romantische Gegenden zu schauen." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 88.
[90] „..wurde es ihm so wohl in seiner Seelen, er vergaß der ganzen Welt..." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 88.

but gentle in the face, clothed in linen and cotton."[91] She tells him that she is from Tiefenbach, but Henrich, who is familiar with the village and those that live there, does not recognize her. He asks her name, and she replies, "Dortchen."[92]

Henrich does not tell a soul about his experience, although it was "so securely engraved in his soul."[93] He bares a similarity to his grandfather Eberhard in this scene. Yet, whereas Eberhard describes what he saw as a vision, neither Henrich nor the narrator describe what Henrich sees as a vision. It is simply a highly coincidental that there is another girl named Dortchen from Tiefenbach and who shares a similar appearance to and interests with Henrich's mother. Furthermore, Eberhard's experience is a supernatural vision; Henrich's is a perfectly real experience, albeit strange and rather unlikely. Henrich's experience is also not religious. It is similar to stumbling upon a ghost or lost soul: this image of Dortchen is bound to the ruins of the Geißenberg castle, which Dortchen declared was her place.

Henrich's experience at the ruins is not alluded to further over the course of the first two books of *Lebensgeschichte*. His interactions with nature remain typical for him: full of profound emotion and introspection. After Henrich has worked as a school teacher, albeit unsuccessfully, he decides that he must travel and leave the land in which he grew up. As he makes his way from home, Henrich turns to the southeast and sees

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[91] „...[Er] sahe ein anmutiges Weibsbild stehen, blaß, aber zärtlich im Gesicht, in Leinen und Baumwolle gekleidet." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 88-89.
[92] „...denn er kannte sie nicht. ‚Wie heißt Ihr denn?' – ‚Dortchen.'" Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 89.
[93] „...so fest hatte es sich seiner Seelen eingeprägt." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 89.

"the old Geißenberg castle, the Giller, the highest hills and other familiar places."[94] "A deep sigh rose in his chest, [and] tears flowed down his cheeks."[95] Henrich writes the following poem as he looks back to his home:

> One more time, my weary eye glances
> To these happy mountains.
> Oh! When I look at the fields,
> Which that Queen of Heaven
> Often paints to me with cool shadows,
> And pure bliss radiates around me;
>
> So I feel, as in sweet dreams,
> The purest winds around me blow,
> As if I, under Eden's trees,
> Saw Father Adam stand by me,
> As if I drank the Water of Life,
> at a stream, in sweet powerlessness sunk.
>
> […]
>
> Come! I turn my gaze
> Towards unfamiliar mountains,
> And look not back to you,
> Until I am once complete.
> Mercy! Guide me in blessing,
> On this unfamiliar way!"[96]

Henrich "stood, dried off his tears, took his stick in hand, the travel pack on his back, and wandered over the peak [and] down into the valley."[97]

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[94] „Da sah er nun in der Ferne das alte Geißenberger Schloß, den Giller, den Höchsten Hügel und andere gewohnte Gegenden mehr." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 147.
[95] „Ein tiefer Seufzer stieg ihm in der Brust auf, Tränen flossen ihm die Wangen herunter..." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 147.
[96] „ Noch einmal blickt mein mattes Auge, nach diesen frohen Bergen hin. Oh! Wenn ich die Gefilde schaue, die jene Himmelskönigin mir oft mit kühlen Schatten malte, und lauter Wonne um mich strahlte; So fühl ich, wie in süßen Träumen, die reinste Lüfte um mich wehn, Als wenn ich unter Edens Bäumen Seh Vater Adam bei mir stehn, Als wenn ich Lebenswasser trünke, am Bach in süße Ohnmacht sünke...Wohlan! ich wende meine Blicke Nach unbekannten Bergen hin, und schaue nicht nach euch zurücke, Bis daß ich einst vollendet bin. Erbarmer! leite mich im Segen, Auf diesen unbekannten Wegen!" Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 147-148.

This scene marks the end of *Jünglingsjahre*, as well as Henrich's life as a peasant. Henrich, now the major figure, feels the emotions typical of Romantics: nostalgia, homesickness, and wanderlust. The emotions he now has are a combination of his love of and fascination with nature, and his desire to see that which is unfamiliar to him. Henrich, unlike the rest of his family, wishes to leave his home, uncertain of what it is he wishes to find. Henrich has rediscovered the wonder of his youth, in which he imagined faraway lands, and has brought this wanderlust to fruition. This scene illustrates Henrich's sentimentality: still within sight of the Giller and the Geißenberg, he has not yet truly left his homeland, but sheds tears for the places and people he will leave behind. This scene, when considering Hartmann's description of the role of nature in peasant literature, proves that more research is necessary in order to adequately address nature's role in such literature.

Clearly, the role that nature plays in Jung-Stilling's autobiography is significant. Through the narrator's voice, Jung-Stilling describes nature without a peasant mindset; only the neighbor Stähler's perspective adheres to the description presented by Hartmann. he mountains around the Stillings' home, the castle ruins at the top of the mountain, and the various fields and meadows of the Siegerland present no simple or utilitarian use to Jung-Stilling's characters. Even Eberhard, who works in nature, largely ignores the necessity to *use* it for any gain. *Lebensgeschichte* is rife with accurate descriptions of nature, and their influences on the characters. Nature in *Lebensgeschichte* plays many roles: the accurate descriptions are evidence of the close, personal knowledge of the

[97] „Nun stand Stilling auf, trocknete seine Tränen ab, nahm seinen Stab in die Hand, den Reisesack auf den Rücken, und wanderte über die Höhe ins Tal herunter." Jung-Stilling, *Lebensgeschichte*, 148.

author on the area; Eberhard and Margarete's viewing nature as evidence for the goodness of God illustrate a deep religious significance in nature; Moritz' mystical, yet scientific way of approaching nature shows a romantic curiosity towards the unknown; Wilhelm's interpretation of symbols and signs in nature represent a sense of individualism; Dortchen's emotional dependence upon the seasons, her tragic attachment to the ruins of the Geißenberg castle, and her appearing in separate visions demonstrate the significance of ruins as sites of nostalgia, decay, and death; Henrich and his emotional reactions to nature show an interest in the aesthetic device. These perspectives illustrate that the role of nature in peasant literature is much more significant than Hartmann allows. Truly, the accurate descriptions present in *Lebensgeschichte* remove any evidence of assumed intimacy of nature present within a pastoral trope, as presented by Sullivan. Jung-Stilling lived in the environments he so accurately portrays in his autobiography. In view of Hartmann's insufficient description of the role of nature in peasant literature, as well as the lack of research concerning the genre and the lack of attention it receives from modern ecocritics, and considering the many perspectives of nature present in Jung-Stilling's *Lebensgeschichte*, the need for further research concerning the genre should be evident. Nature's role in peasant literature thus deserves greater attention from literary scholars, and until such research is performed, no all-encompassing judgment can be made regarding it.

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